

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 LONDON 00079 031650Z

51

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 INT-08 OMB-01

TRSE-00 DRC-01 /131 W

----- 009882

R 031637Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6768

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LONDON 00079

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UK

SUBJECT: POLITICS OF STAGE THREE: TYING THE CAN

1. AS THE COAL DISPUTE DRAGS ON AND THE THREE-DAY WORK WEEK BEGINS TO BITE, BRITISH POLITICIANS ARE MANEUVERING TO AVOID THE ELECTORAL FALLOUT. ALL TOO AWARE THAT A FULL CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE MINERS AND THE GOVERNMENT COULD PRECIPITATE AN EARLY GENERAL ELECTION, BOTH MAJOR PARTIES ARE UNDERSTANDABLY SEEKING TO PIN THE BLAME ON ONE ANOTHER.

2. LEADING THE ATTACK FOR LABOR, TONY BENN, SHADOW MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, HAS WRITTEN LETTERS
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 LONDON 00079 031650Z

TO THE PRIME MINISTER DEMANDING DETAILED INFORMATION

ON COAL STOCKPILES AND CHALLENGING THE NEED TO REDUCE THE WORK WEEK AT ALL. HE AND OTHER LABOR SPOKESMEN HAVE ACCUSED THE PM OF EXAGGERATING THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION AND DELIBERATELY TAKING DRACONIAN MEASURES IN ORDER TO INFLAME POPULAR OPINION AGAINST THE MINERS -- ALL TO ENHANCE CONSERVATIVE CHANCES IN A SNAP GENERAL ELECTION.

3. GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN, IN REPLY, HAVE SUPPLIED THE - DATA DEMANDED BY BENN AND REAFFIRMED THE NECESSITY OF THE MEASURES TAKEN. HEATH HAS PERSONALLY LAID FULL BLAME ON THE MINERS AND SAID THERE COULD BE NO JUSTIFICATION FOR THE DAMAGE THEIR INDUSTRIAL ACTION WAS INFLECTING ON THE BRITISH ECONOMY. HE HAS ALSO CALLED ON BENN TO STATE PUBLICLY THAT UNIONS AND EMPLOYERS SHOULD ACCEPT STAGE THREE LIMITATIONS ON WAGE SETTLEMENTS.

4. THE LIBERALS HAVE REMAINED QUIET THROUGH ALL THIS, AT LEAST UNTIL YESTERDAY, WHEN CYRIL SMITH, THEIR SPOKESMAN ON INDUSTRIAL AFFAIRS, CRITICIZED THEIR LEADER, JEREMY THORPE, FOR LACK OF ACTION. CONCERNED NO DOUBT THAT THE LIBERAL PARTY MIGHT BE VIEWED AS INCREASINGLY IRRELEVANT IN THIS PERIOD OF NATIONAL CRISIS, SMITH WROTE TO THORPE ASKING, "WHEN THE HELL ARE WE GOING TO DO SOMETHING?"

5. MEANWHILE, ALL THREE PARTY HEADQUARTERS ARE ACCELERATING THEIR CONTINGENCY PREPARATIONS FOR A SNAP GENERAL ELECTION.

6. COMMENT: THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM AMONG POLITICAL PUNDITS IS THAT IN AN ELECTION FOUGHT ON THE ISSUE OF WHO GOVERNS BRITAIN, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE RETURNED WITH AN INCREASED MAJORITY. THIS IS PROBABLY TRUE AS FAR AS IT GOES, BUT MUCH DEPENDS ON HOW THE GOVERNMENT HANDLES ITSELF DURING THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. IT MUST BE SEEN TO BE BOTH FIRM AND FAIR WITH THE MINERS, AND IT MUST PERSUADE THE ELECTORATE THAT THE MEASURES IT HAS TAKEN AND THE CONSEQUENT HARDSHIPS INFLECTED ARE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 LONDON 00079 031650Z

NECESSARY AND ARE THE FAULT OF THE UNIONS.

7. THE LABOR PARTY, BECAUSE OF ITS CLOSE IDENTIFICATION WITH THE UNIONS, REALIZES THAT ITS OWN ELECTORAL PROSPECTS WILL SUFFER IF THE GOVERNMENT SUCCEEDS IN MOBILIZING POPULAR SUPPORT AGAINST THE MINERS. IT MUST SEEK THEREFORE BOTH TO COUNTER THE GOVERNMENT'S CASE AND TO BROADEN THE ARGUMENT SO AS TO INCLUDE

ISSUES LESS TO THE GOVERNMENT'S ADVANTAGE, E.G.,
ALLEGED MISMANAGEMENT OF THE ECONOMY, TAX DISCRIMINA-
TION IN FAVOR OF THE RICH, COSTS OF EC MEMBERSHIP, ETC.
WHETHER OR NOT THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION IS IN FACT
CALLED ANYTIME SOON, THIS PAST WEEK'S PARTISAN EXCHANGES
INDICATE THAT AT LEAST THE RUN-UP CAMPAIGN HAS NOW
BEGUN IN EARNEST.

SOHM

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LONDON00079
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740164/aaaaciuk.tel
Line Count: 124
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 JUL 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19-Jul-2001 by boyleja>; APPROVED <20 MAR 2002 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POLITICS OF STAGE THREE: TYING THE CAN
TAGS: PINT, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005